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OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN
FOR
LAGUNA ATASCOSA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, TEXAS

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Oil Spill Contingency Plan

for

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

Intent

This plan is intended to serve as a step by step guide to emergency oil spill response in the event that such a spill threatens refuge lands and wildlife.

Because it may take several hours before professional oil spill responders and cleanup crews arrive, the emergency efforts of refuge personnel may play a key role in minimizing impacts to refuge lands and wildlife resources. The primary goal in this emergency response is to minimize the impacts on the trust resources of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Appendix A lists the priorities for Service response, as outlined in the Service's Response Plan for Discharges of Oil and Releases of Hazardous Substances (Service Contingency Plan - SCP). For specifics regarding legal authorities and responsibilities, refer to the Service Contingency Plan.

This plan pertains to spills of petroleum products only. Because of the threat to human health involved in responding to hazardous substances spills, evacuation may be the appropriate response. There are few Service personnel who are trained for hazardous spill response. The Service policy states that Service personnel will not enter hazardous waste sites without specific Regional clearance. Additionally, the likelihood of a petroleum spill in the vicinity of Laguna Atascosa is greater than that of a hazardous substance spill, since most barges carrying hazardous waste are double-hulled versus the single-hulled barges used for petroleum products.

Following is a numbered, step by step response sequence that should be followed in the event an oil spill is discovered or reported to the refuge. The three most likely spill scenarios are covered in the response sequence. These three scenarios (Appendix B, Figure B1), are:

- (A) A pipeline rupture at the Upper Cayo Atascosa crossing at FM 106,
- (B) A barge collision or spill in the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW)
- (C) A barge collision or spill in the Harlingen Ship Channel.

After completing steps one through eight proceed to 9A (pipeline rupture at Upper Cayo Atascosa), 9B (spill in the GIWW), or 9C (spill in the Harlingen Ship Channel) according to the spill scenario. Actions which should be taken in order to prepare for a spill are presented in Appendix C. Equipment needs are presented in Appendix D. Colonial bird nesting islands are listed in appendix E, and secondary responses are listed in Appendix F. Appendix G provides telephone numbers of those who may need to be contacted. Wildlife rehabilitation and oiled bird cleaning are addressed in appendix H, even though related activities are not strictly emergency priority issues. Prevention and habitat protection must be the focus during the first few hours.

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This is a dynamic document and is intended to be updated as appropriate. Although it is recognized that it is impossible to foresee, prepare for, and control all potential oil spill scenarios, it is hoped that this document will help guide personnel reacting in the critical initial stages.

Priority Response Sequence

1. Cease all non essential work. If more than one staff member is available, assign one to make the telephone contacts 2-6 while other personnel proceed immediately to step 7. If only one staff member is available, begin with the phone calls in the order listed.

2. If he has not already been notified, call the Refuge Manager.
Steve Thompson home 748-2473, or office 512/748-3607.

3. If they have not already been notified, call:

Corpus Christi Marine Safety Office (512) 888-3162
National Response Center (800) 424-8802 or (202) 267-2675.
Texas Emergency Response Center (TERC) (512) 463-7727
Texas General Land Office 1-800-832-8224
Texas Water Commission (512) 968-3165
USFWS Texas Coast Spill Coordinator - Brian Cain (713) 286 8282
Home (713) 480 7418
mobile phone (713) 542 1861

Tell them:

- i. Your name and callback number.
 - ii. Exact location and nature of the incident.
 - iii. Extent of personal injuries, fire and damage.
 - iv. Wind speed and direction (if possible).
 - v. If identifiable, the type of material involved and the extent of the spill, and the barge or ship name and number. **ONLY trained personnel should ever approach a fire or spill.**
5. Call the Environmental Contaminants Specialist at the Corpus Christi ES Office.
Contaminants Specialist - Tom Schultz Office (512) 994-9005

	Home	855-8744
Alternate Stephen Robertson	Home	991-4659
 6. Call the designated pilot and arrange for an overflight survey for the refuge manager immediately, or at first light if at night.

McCreery Aviation Co. S. 10th, McAllen (512) 686-1774.

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7. Check wind speed and direction. Call Weather information at Brownsville National Weather Service (512) 542-8231/2438.

8. If possible, designate one person as the media contact. This should be someone who can provide specific information about the resources at risk. If the spill is large enough to catch the media's attention, the refuge will be besieged by the press! Advise the media they must remain out of refuge airspace when this may haze birds from clean to oiled areas.

A. Rupture in pipeline at the Upper Cayo Atascosa crossing at F.M. 106.

9A. Immediately go to the Upper Cayo Atascosa with boom materials and extend these across the Upper Cayo at the two fixed stations (Appendix B, Figure B2), securing the booms to the fixed anchor points.

10A. Simultaneously to the above step office personnel should contact the pipeline company at Koch Gathering Systems, (512) 289-1492 or 1 (800) 242-3346, or 1 (800) 666-0051.

11A. Remain in the area and haze birds away from the oiled sections, and to direct vacuum trucks to the boom locations.

12A. Coordinate with the USFWS spill coordinator to determine if oiled birds will be cleaned. Follow oiled wildlife rehabilitation protocol (see appendix H).

B. One or more barges run aground or collide in the GIWW, breaking their hulls and thus releasing their cargo. Depending on the winds, much of this may soon end up on refuge property. During winter months, (October-March) redhead ducks will be at high risk. During spring and summer, (February-July) nesting colonies of birds on the rookery islands will be at high risk. Concentrations of shore birds will be at risk from August through March.

9B. Mobilize Air boats and tunnel drive boat to the Area. Contact TP&W at 512 (546-1952) and request their assistance if they are available. Patrol and haze waterfowl and/or shorebirds from the area about to be oiled, as directed from aerial survey, and later from the oiled areas. During the period of March to July herons, egrets, terns, and gulls will be nesting on islands in the Laguna Madre. Hazing these birds in the vicinity of these islands would be counterproductive and is not recommended.

10B. Recon of sensitive areas to boom.

11B. Coordinate with the USFWS spill coordinator to determine if oiled birds will be cleaned. Follow oiled wildlife rehabilitation protocol (see appendix H).

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C. Barge Spill in the Harlingen Ship Channel.

- 9C. Immediately go to Crossing #2 and close the gates. This should prevent oil from entering Laguna Atascosa in a North wind.
- 10C. Remain in the area and haze waterfowl away from the oiled sections.
- 11C. Contact D&D Oil [(512) 399-8755] Service to send out a vacuum truck(s) to remove accumulated oil.
- 12C. Coordinate with the USFWS spill coordinator to determine if oiled birds will be cleaned. Follow oiled wildlife rehabilitation protocol (see appendix H).

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A

Priorities for Service Response

Each of the actions listed below should be provided for during advance planning and carried out where applicable in the event of a spill. The actions are listed in order of priority should lack of manpower or other limiting factors constrain the level of response to a spill.

1. Protect threatened and endangered species and their habitats including, where advisable, rescue and rehabilitation of individual animals.
2. Minimize the direct and immediate impacts to fish and wildlife populations (such as dispersal of birds and other wildlife) and advise the On Scene Coordinator (OSC) of actions needed to minimize impacts to or prevent destruction of fish and wildlife habitats.
3. Assist State agencies or the OSC with collection of oiled birds and other wildlife and advise/assist groups wishing to rehabilitate oiled wildlife. The Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Coalition and/or the Tri State Rehabilitation Center in Delaware will likely be involved. Refer to appendix H "Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Protocol".
4. Provide the media and public with information on Service response activities only through the On Scene Coordinator. Avoid talking directly to the press "off the cuff".
5. Perform other activities to minimize indirect impacts to fish and wildlife resources, as warranted. Identify priorities and mark nesting islands that could easily be boomed with absorbent materials to help keep oil off the beach.

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APPENDIX B

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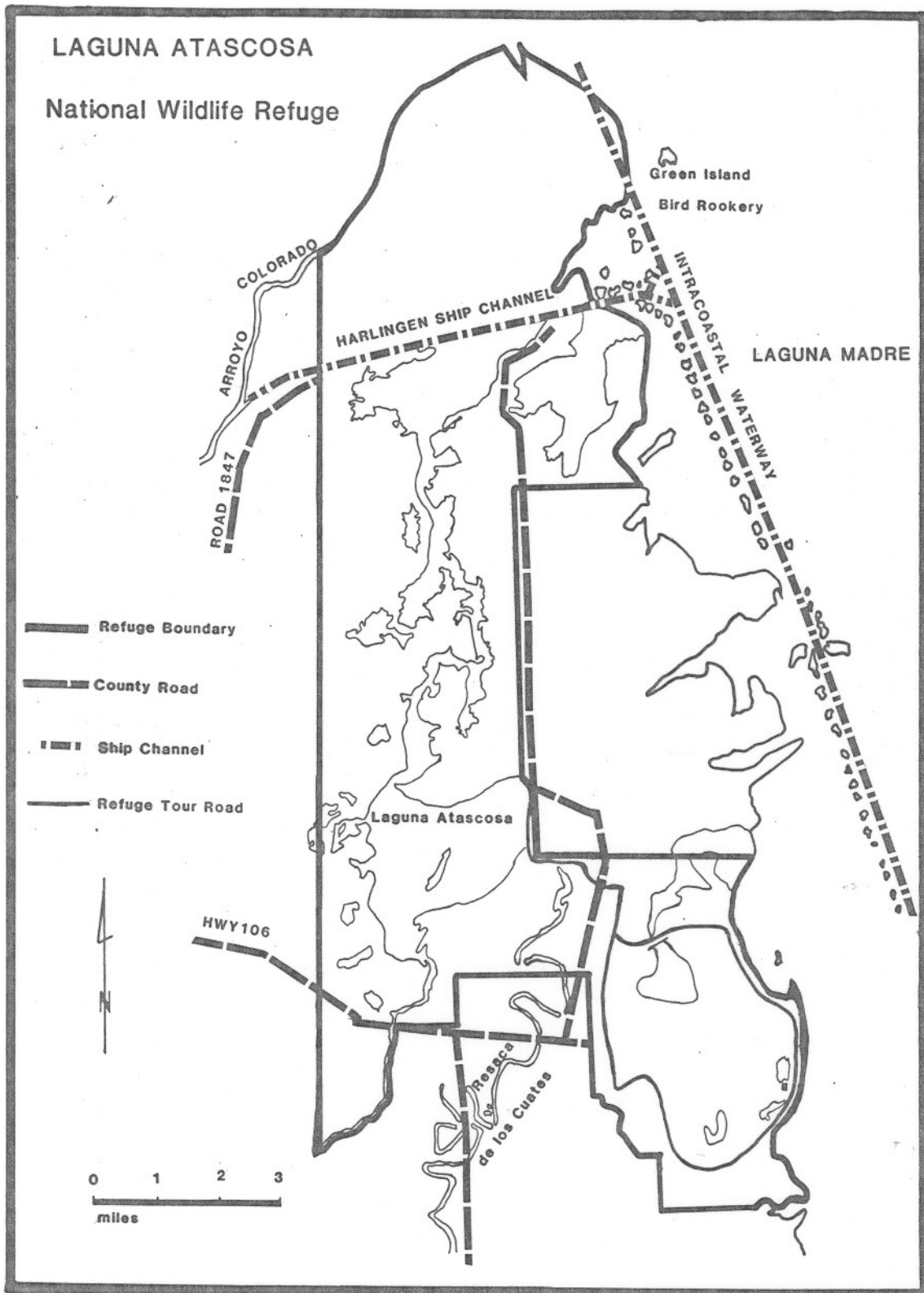


Figure B1 Laguna Atascosa NWR overall view

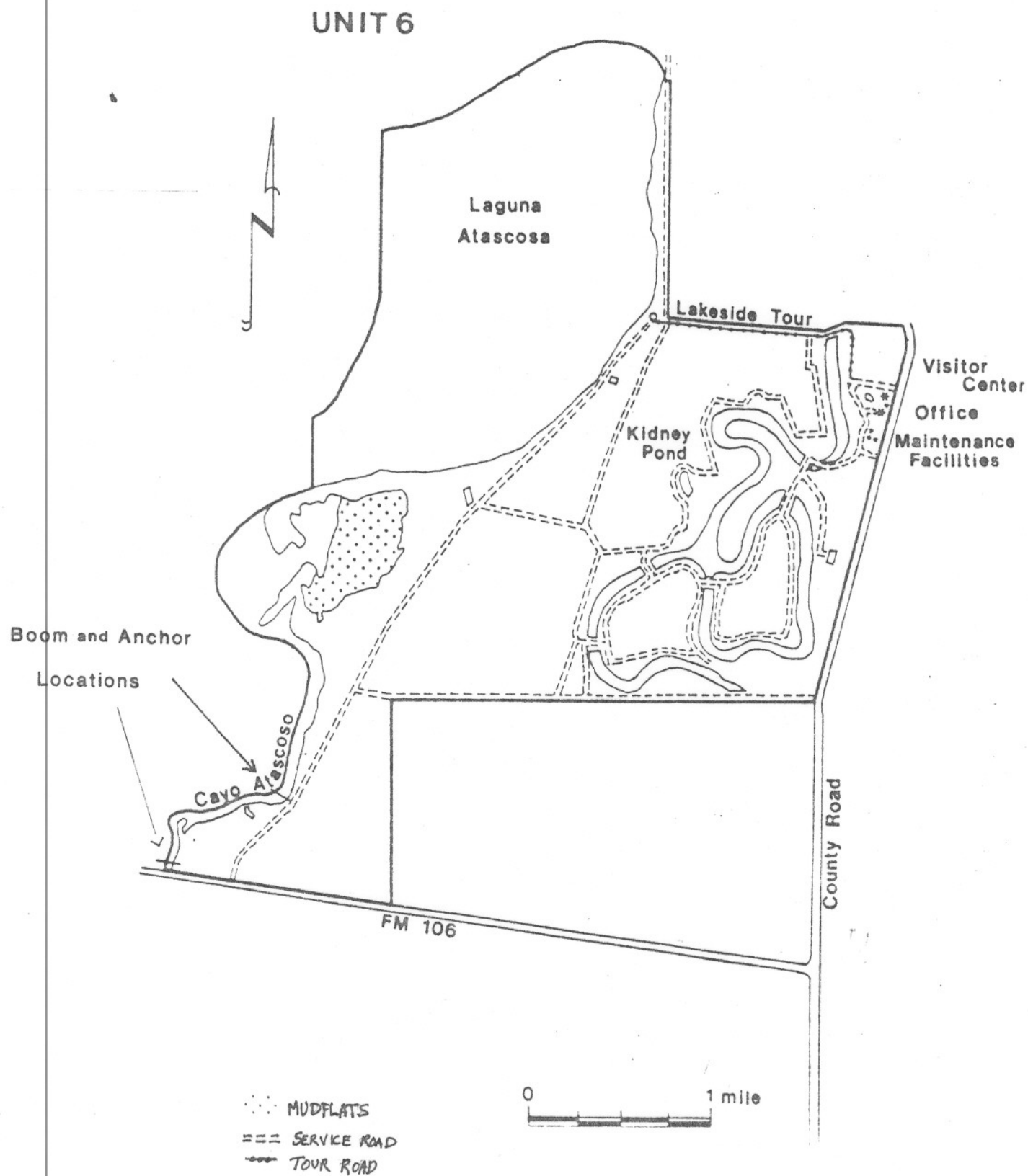


Figure B2 Cayo Atascosa FM 106 crossing detail

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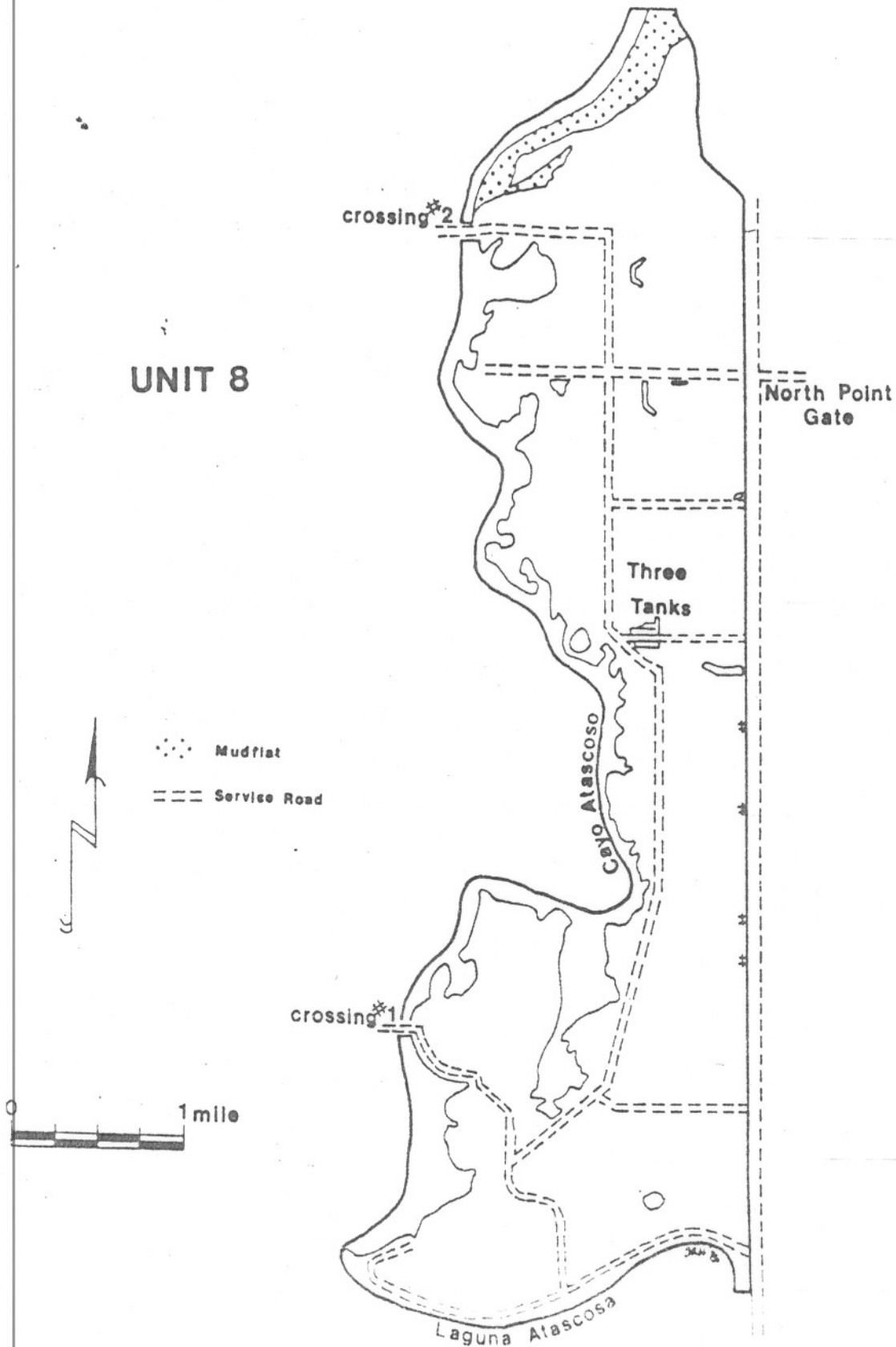


Figure B3 Cayo Atascoso crossing #2 detail

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Appendix C

Preparations Necessary Prior to Spill

1. Locate pilot with proper certifications for overflight survey. Clarify needs, billing, availability etc. so no time is lost when a situation arises.
2. Arrange for training of personnel.
 - i. Oil Spill Control School. Corpus Christi. Personnel involved in oil spill work should have 40 hours OSHA safety training.
 - ii. Oiled Bird Cleaning. Annual workshops.
3. Ensure that all staff who may be capturing oiled birds are listed on state and federal collecting permits.
4. Measure distances to be covered by fixed-position booms, taking into account sags and angular deflection arrangements. Acquire sufficient boom material. Install on site storage sheds or obtain trailer for storing/transporting booms and other spill control material.
5. Locate positions for boom anchors and set.. ie. four to five foot lengths of 6" to 8" diameter PVC pipe driven into the ground with about 3 feet exposed. Refuge personnel must develop a boom strategy, locating and marking exact locations where booms should be placed for maximum efficiency for all three of the likely scenarios.
6. Check to see if booms can be extended without wading/swimming.. ie. using throwlines.
7. Obtain information from the Port of Harlingen and the GIWW to find out what types of materials are transported in their respective waterways.
8. Carry out drills as required to familiarize staff with equipment, procedures, etc.

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Appendix D

Equipment On Site

Quantity	Item
2	Air Boats
1	17.5 foot Tunnel drive boat
800 feet	Oil Containment Boom with 18-24" skirt
0	Ropes, throw lines for setting up booms
11 air canons	Bird hazing equipment (air canons, etc)
4 portable radios,	Radios/ communication equipment
10 mobiles, 4 base	
13 vehicles, 5 tractors	Vehicles, tractors etc.
Scale, water pic, four-30 gallon containers liquid soap.	Bird cleaning supplies and designated work area
1 (Bunkers)	On site storage for boom material and other supplies or
25' Semi platoon trailer	Trailer loaded with boom material for mobilization to site
0	Sorbent pads and materials, hay bales
0	Portable anchors for variable-position booms

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Appendix E

Nesting Islands Off of Atascosa Refuge

Bird count #	Name	Species of particular concern
618-160	Green Island Cut Spoil	Terns
618-161	Green Island	Egrets, Herons, Ibises, Spoonbills
618-180	Arroyo Colorado Int. Spoil	Gulls, Herons, Terns, Skimmers
618-181	East Arroyo Spoil	Terns
618-182	Three Island Spoil	Gulls, Terns, Herons, Egrets
618-183	South Three Islands	

Note: All of the above are owned by the TX General Land Office with Green Island being leased by Audobon.

This list should be modified and updated yearly by Refuge personnel to reflect actual status.

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Appendix F

Secondary Responses

1. Search for, cleanup and tabulation of oiled birds. Prepare data sheets on bird numbers and species. See appendix H. As part of oiled wildlife rehabilitation efforts, considerable volumes of oily, soapy water will be produced. A tank for storage of this effluent will be necessary, along with a regular removal, by vacuum truck, to the potentially responsible party's (PRP) designated waste handler.
2. Maintain documentation of staff time and expenditures for equipment during the response since these may be reimbursed either from the responsible party or the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund administered by the US Coast Guard. Accurate documentation will also be needed for Natural resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) compensation claims.

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Appendix G

Other Important Contacts and Phone Numbers

Pilot	(512) 686-1774
Marie Fernandez	748 4238
Rudy Escamilla	748 3130
Samuel Elizondo	748 2775
Arturo Villareal	546 5404
Oralia Munoz	428 9001
Ondina Diaz	748 2956
Linda Laack	748 2664
Alfredo Salinas	542 4873

FIRE DEPARTMENTS	Rio-Hondo 748-3434
	INS 233-4431
	Los Fresnos 233-5858

ADJACENT LANDOWNERS	Buena Vista Ranch 748-3795
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TEXAS GAME WARDENS	Brownsville 546-1952
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EMS	Harlingen & San Benito 428-1919
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Mike Farmer, Audubon	(512) 546-4446
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Harlingen Bird Rescue, Inc.	(512) 421-2473
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Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Coalition, Inc.	(713) 941-8902
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USFWS LAW ENFORCEMENT	Tom Mason Office (512) 888 3167
	Corpus Christi

	Joe Ramos Office (512) 686-8591
	McAllen

KOCH Gathering Systems, Inc.

AREA REPRESENTATIVE	James "Spud" McClish	289-1492
	Mobile	607-2424
	Pager	421-8573
	Residence	423-7764

DIVISION MANAGER	Ron Seba	(512) 289-1492
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Appendix H

Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Strategy

During an oil spill event, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TP&W) will jointly assume the responsibility for the cleanup and rehabilitation of oiled wildlife. The decision as to IF, WHERE and WHEN will be made on a case by case basis. The procedures to be used will be those employed in the Oiled Bird Cleaning Workshops jointly sponsored by USFWS, TP&W and the Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Coalition (TWRC). Only rehabilitators with current state and federal permits will operate cleanup centers, with non permitted volunteers working under their guidance in the case of a spill having a major impact on wildlife.

NOTE: Oiled wildlife can be quite dangerous, especially herons and their kin. Do not attempt their "rescue" unless you are properly prepared with protective eye ware, nets, gloves etc. Be aware of possible infectious disease risks from handling weakened and sick wildlife.